

# PEOPLE & THINGS

**I**T is, if anything, from an excess of conservatism that I have never attended the Conservative Literary Luncheons which Mr. Humphry Berkeley has lately been organising at the Overseas League. For one who likes to eat sitting down and at leisure there is something disagreeably new-fangled in the idea of a cold fork-luncheon topped off with a harangue.

These foggy objections caused me to forfeit the address which was given last April, under Mr. Berkeley's auspices, by Mr. T. S. Eliot. It has now been printed, under the title "The Literature of Politics," with a foreword by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Eliot announced himself, many years ago now, as being a classicist in literature, an Anglo-Catholic in religion, and a royalist in politics; but never, to my knowledge, has he engaged directly in political controversy. "The Literature of Politics" suggests that he could, had he so wished, have made himself the doughtiest of pamphleteers.

## A Tradition Continued

**"THE** Conservative tradition," Mr. Eliot remarks, "is also a tradition of good writing." And, lest it be remarked that in recent years the fun and the fireworks have come mostly from other quarters, he evokes the case of Bernard Shaw. "One is compelled," he says, "to admire a man of such verbal agility as not only to conceal from his readers and audiences the shallowness of his own thought, but to persuade them that in admiring his work they were giving evidence of their own intelligence as well. I do not say that Shaw could have succeeded alone, without the more plodding and laborious minds with whom he associated himself; but by persuading low-brows that they were high-brows, and that high-brows must be socialists, he contributed greatly to the prestige of socialism."

"But," he concludes, "between the influence of a Bernard Shaw or an H. G. Wells, and the influence of a Coleridge or a Newman, I can conceive no common scale of measurement."

Mr. Eliot's lecture was given at the time of the newspaper strike, and for this reason was not widely reported; but it makes excellent holiday-reading, and I do not doubt that reverberations of our pleasure will reach the author, who is at present enjoying, in a back-street in Geneva, his own characteristically discreet kind of holiday.

## Ambassador

### Extraordinary

**BELGIUM** is not the easiest of countries to know; an experienced visitor can take the pulse of Paris in ten minutes, but the temper of Brussels is altogether more ponderous, more private, less easy to surmise.

The more striking, therefore, is the glow of true affection which surrounds Sir Christopher Warner, K.C.M.G., who has just left Brussels after four years as H.M. Ambassador, and is now retiring from the Foreign Service.

Sir Christopher went to Brussels after no fewer than twenty-three years' continuous service in London; and it is no secret that he had almost to be gouged out of headquarters in order to undertake what were, for him, the largely unfamiliar duties of representation abroad. In the event, he turned to these duties with un-

## By ATTICUS

feigned and infectious pleasure. Nothing (as many English visitors to Brussels can testify) was too much trouble for him; nobody was unimportant. With the help of his sister, Miss Janetta Warner, he turned the long drawing-room in the Rue Ducale into the bright image of an unpretended welcome; and altogether I was not surprised to hear that M. Spaak said recently in a public speech that he recognised in Sir Christopher a first-class Ambassador, not only because he was exemplary in official dealings, but because he had never seen an Ambassador so loved by the local community.

## St George's Hall

**I**T seems reasonable to assume that one result of the changed climate between East and West will be a general relaxation of the formalities which now beset would-be visitors to Russia.

Those who look forward to roller-skating down the waxed corridors of the Kremlin will



be as interested as I was to peruse the comprehensive study of the Kremlin which was recently completed by Mr. Arthur Joyce. It seems only appropriate that the rapprochement should be celebrated by an American historian; and Mr. Joyce's book, which is to be published tomorrow by Messrs. Thames and Hudson, is written with due regard for the barbaric charm of its subject. The illustration which I reproduce here is devoted to the Hall of St. George, or Georgievskaya Zala, which measures two hundred feet by seventy. The name is, of course, ancient, and should not be seen as a mark of new-found enthusiasm for this country.

## Crème de Mante

**ANYONE** who is enough of a Proustian to resent the exasperating fantasies with which the Third Programme of the B.B.C. so regularly regales us will turn with relish and relief to the Proust exhibition which is to open at Messrs. Widenstein's in Bond Street on October 5.

Proust is the most pictorial, the most tangible of authors; and this exhibition, which has been arranged by the French Embassy to coincide with the appearance of the English translation of his posthumous novel "Jean Santeuil," will be notable for the number, variety and authenticity of its items. Madame Gérard Mante, Proust's niece, has for the first time been persuaded to allow his MSS. to be shown outside

France; there will be portraits, photographs and souvenirs in abundance; and although the idea of shipping his motor-car to London has had to be rejected on the grounds that it could not be got through the door, there will be objects in plenty to provoke the devotee to a lifetime of agreeable reverie.

My own favourite will certainly be the cigarette-lighter, bearing on front and back the outlines of an English penny, which figures in the great novel as having been made by Saint-Loup's batman and was, in point of fact, kept at Proust's bedside throughout his last illness.

## Mann and Superman

**ONLY** a few weeks ago I was listening fascinated while Ernest Newman explained the tremendous magnitude of one of Thomas Mann's most remarkable achievements—his portrait of a composer in "Doktor Faustus." "A wonderfully penetrating study of a musician's mind," said Mr. Newman. "Of course, he was very well coached by a certain German musician, but he was certainly musical himself." (One remembers Castorp listening to "L'Après-Midi d'un Faune" in "The Magic Mountain").

Mann was a great writer by any standards, and moreover one indissolubly linked to his own time and place—late nineteenth- and twentieth-century Germany. He roamed the world, he hated Nazism, he looked in the last few years for the reconciliation of East and West. Yet it was not in his scattered political writings that his deepest essence was to be found. It was in his novels that the constant struggle of elevated—not to say inflated—ideals and progressive corruption (usually symbolised by some frightful disease) was consistently fought out. And "Doktor Faustus" was its most striking image. This picture of the modern German Geist was understandably greeted with mixed feelings in the Fatherland in 1947; and in 1949 the award of the Goethe Bicentenary Prize to Mann, the truthful exile who did not come home, was angrily criticised. No wonder; yet if "Faustus" were not so hard to read I would make a study of it compulsory for every member of an international organisation.

## A Regretted Eminence

**WITH** the return to New Delhi this week of Mr. Parmeshwar N. Haksar, London's diplomatic and Commonwealth community loses one of its best-liked and admired members. Mr. Haksar, a shrewd and jovial lawyer-turned-diplomat, has been at India House in London as the High Commissioner's Counselor on external affairs for eight years.

He has worked with all three High Commissioners—Mr. Krishna Menon, Mr. B. Ker and Mrs. Pandit—and has acquired something of the reputation of an eminence grise among his colleagues, though in fact his qualities of warmth, simplicity and frankness are far removed from anything so sinister.

His new job in Delhi is of a kind that few professional diplomats like: after two months' leave he is to become Head of the Press Department of the Ministry of External Affairs, and the prospect somewhat alarms him. But his wide circle of English friends here, and especially in the Foreign Office and the Commonwealth Relations Office, would warmly endorse Mr. Nehru's choice. A first-class senior spokesman in Delhi is becoming indispensable.